

BOYCOTT ICM 2022 IN RUSSIA

At the 2018 General Assembly in São Paulo the IMU took a decision, with 83 votes to 63, that the next International Congress of Mathematicians will be hosted by Saint Petersburg [1]. The Russian Federation is constantly criticised by the international community for violations of human rights, breaking international laws and performing aggressive politics towards other countries. Numerous reports (see below) show that the situation has worsened drastically over the recent years. Since 2014 the Russian Federation is subject to international sanctions by a large number of countries including the European Union and the United States. At the same time the country was suspended from participation in G8.

Under these circumstances, the decision of IMU to hold the Congress in Russia demonstrates either moral indifference or ignorance about the actions of Putin's regime. In view of this, we *ask the mathematical community to issue a voice of protest and boycott the next ICM*. Although we highly appreciate the contribution of the Russian school to development of mathematical science, we disagree that Russia is a proper venue for the Congress and we cannot accept its funding by the Russian government.

Violation of human rights in Russia. Russia is considered to be an authoritarian state by the Democracy Index [2] and it is listed as a non free country by the Freedom in the World index [3] (including a record low 20/100 rating in the 2017 and 2018). Experts observe the lack of free and fair elections, purges and jailing of political opponents, and curtailed press freedom. The most widely known critics of Putin's regime who have been assassinated include the journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya, liberal politician Sergei Yushenkov, human rights activist Natalya Estemirova, journalist and anti-fascist Anastasia Baburova, human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, American journalist and chief editor of the Russian edition of Forbes Paul Klebnikov, physicist and liberal politician Boris Nemtsov. To touch the topic of mathematical sciences, the famous inventor of knot invariants Victor Vassiliev was arrested in 2014 during a peaceful protest in support of the defendants in the Bolotnaya Square Case [4, 5]. At the time of writing this text police crushed a peaceful protest and over 400 people were detained in Saint Petersburg [6].

In recent years the number of human rights defenders, journalists and scientists in Russian prisons and penal colonies have risen sharply. As for September 2018, the Russian human rights centre Memorial reports there are at least 188 political prisoners or prisoners of conscience [7]. There are numerous allegations of torture by penitentiary officials in the Russian Federation, see e.g. [8]. Currently imprisoned include the film director Oleh Sentsov, who is on hunger strike since May 2018. The European Film Board and some of the most highly-regarded world film directors have addressed letters to Russian authorities in support of Oleh Sentsov. In June 2018 the European Parliament supported a resolution on the immediate release of Sentsov and other political prisoners [9].

In 2013 Russia adopted a federal law which de facto criminalizes LGBT culture. (In March of 2012 this law was approved by the governor of St. Petersburg Georgy Poltavchenko, who is a co-chair of the Executive Organizing Committee for the ICM 2022 [?].) This resulted in numerous arrests of Russian LGBT citizens publicly opposing

the law and there has reportedly been a surge of homophobic propaganda, violence and hate crimes using the law as justification. In 2017 United Nations Human Rights Council condemned the wave of torture and killings of gay men in Chechnya [10].

Aggression towards other countries. In February-March 2014 Russian military troops invaded and annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine. The United Nations General Assembly condemns the annexation and calls upon all States and international organizations not to recognize or to imply the recognition of Crimea as Russian territory [11]. A report by UN [12] documents that Russia systematically curtails the civil, political and cultural rights of Crimean Tatars.

International organizations recognize Russian presence in the ongoing military conflict in the East of Ukraine [13]. The war started in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea. It already took more than 10,000 lives, wounded over 25,000 and made more than 2,000,000 people flee their homes. Russian military supplied and subsequently recovered the missile launcher that shot down a scheduled passenger flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on 17 July 2014, killing 298 people [14, 15, 16, 17].

In 2015 Russia joined the Syrian civil war in support of the president Bashar al-Assad, whose army uses against its population such internationally condemned methods as barrel bombs and chemical strikes. Between April and August 2018, Russia conducted at least 13,000 air strikes [8]. As for September 2018, the UK-based Syrian Network for Human Rights reports over 6,000 civilians killed by the Russian Forces, while the total death toll reaches over 200,000 [18].

Why boycott the ICM. One could argue that math should be away from politics, or that building a wall with Russia would be disadvantageous for the development of scientific knowledge. The aim of the boycott is not to penalize Russian mathematicians for the actions of Russian government or prevent their collaboration with the colleagues abroad. The Congress is co-organized and financed by the Russian government [19]. We believe that by recognizing the Congress in Russia, the mathematical community implicitly lends credibility to Putin's regime. In this regard the ICM will stand alongside the controversial 2018 FIFA World Cup, which was diplomatically boycotted by the United Kingdom and Iceland. Despite for the numerous calls for boycott in the European Parliament and absence of western government delegations at the opening ceremony, the World Cup whitewashed the image of Russia in mass media all over the world.

In 1966 Alexander Grothendieck was awarded the Fields Medal, but didn't attend the International Congress in Moscow, protesting the Soviet regime. As scientists, we are capable of thinking. So let us acknowledge the importance of defending the peace and human freedom in today's world. Let us take a stand.

What you can do. Sign at the boycott web page [20]. Spread the word about it. Don't accept financial support of your work by Russian sources. Working with colleagues from Russia, prefer meetings at your institution rather than theirs.

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